

Lowell Public Schools

# Strategic Planning Draft Update

April 2020

*Building a Five-Year Plan*





## Lowell Public Schools - Developing Strategic Plan

Process and Sequence Check: How we arrived at these four proposed Strategic Priorities

- 1. Spring 2019: Superintendent Hiring Process:**  
Mandate to develop strategies to close opportunity gaps and cultivate more equitable learning environment for all students.
- 2. July - January 2019: Superintendent's Listening Tour:**  
Accumulation of information on district's strengths, challenges, and opportunities through hundreds of stakeholder meetings, including nearly 60 listening sessions with staff, over 40 gatherings with external partners and community representatives, and 100 school visits in the first 100 school days.
- 3. October - December 2019: Strategic Planning Goal and Priority Setting:**  
Development of Core Beliefs, Fundamental Commitments and the broad goals and specific priorities thought necessary to bring about sustainable improvements to LPS based on achievement data and trajectories.
- 4. January - March 2020: School Community Visits:**  
Discussed developing priority and goal areas in dozens of meetings across over 20 LPS schools to hear from frontline educators.





## Lowell Public Schools - Developing Strategic Plan

### Conclusions that have shaped the proposed Strategic Priorities:

1. Throughout the Lowell Public Schools, students are experiencing meaningful, innovative, and engaging learning experiences.
2. The diversity and commitment to equity within the Lowell community is an enormous advantage on which LPS must capitalize to ensure continued progress.
3. LPS must strive to eliminate achievement gaps arising from systemic barriers to the excellent educational opportunities available throughout LPS.
4. LPS's educational programming must be fully aligned with and relevant to the rapidly evolving and increasingly competitive world in which its graduates will ultimately reside.







# Lowell Public Schools - Developing Strategic Plan

## Strategic Priorities: Core Component of the LPS 5-Year Strategic Plan

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### **What are the Strategic Priorities?**

The Strategic Priorities are the four core work streams at the heart of the district's proposed strategic plan that will be submitted to the Lowell School Committee in May of 2020.

### **Why are these four priorities being proposed as the core of the Strategic Plan?**

They reflect information about the district's most pressing needs as determined by the charge to the superintendent upon his appointment and feedback both from the superintendent's entry listening tour and dozens of school community forums convened between January and March.

### **How will the COVID-18 public health crisis affect this work?**

The importance of the underlying prioritization of improving equitable access to the excellent opportunities present in LPS is magnified by the current crisis, but the timelines and sequences connected to the associated workstreams will require flexibility and pragmatism as the district continues to navigate the worldwide implications of COVID-19.





## Strategic Planning Initiative: Developing the Five-Year Plan for the Lowell Public Schools

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### Four Strategic Priorities:

#### Strategic Priority # 1:

Increase access to and coordination of early learning opportunities for children from birth to age 5 by supporting the work of community partners to ensure that every child in Lowell is academically, emotionally, and socially prepared for Kindergarten.

#### Strategic Priority # 2:

Increase access for all students to high performing seats through the continuous improvement of all schools, the expansion of high demand programs, and an intensive focus on turning around historically underperforming schools.

#### Strategic Priority # 3:

Align secondary school curriculum and programs for all students with post-secondary opportunities so that they are college, career, and life ready upon graduation.

#### Strategic Priority # 4:

Leverage the rich diversity that defines the Lowell community through a fundamental commitment to equity so that all students access the full benefits of growing up in a truly global community.



**Strategic Priority # 1:** Increase access to and coordination of early learning opportunities for children from birth to age 5 by supporting the work of community partners to ensure that every child in Lowell is academically, emotionally, and socially prepared for Kindergarten.

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**Why:** The most effective way to eliminate gaps in achievement is to prevent them from occurring. Opportunity gaps in early grades (which create compounding challenges in later grades) are apparent from the moment students enter LPS. More equitable access to educational services prior to age 5 will reduce this inequity.

**Current Strength:** LPS and Lowell community enjoy a robust collection of early education partners devoted to early education and care with a invaluable expertise in the area of early education and care.

**Action Steps:**

1. Determine LPS's internal capacity for additional early education services, and support early education community partners in determining and potentially expanding their own capacity.
2. Explore EEC metrics to help support community partners in adoption of best practices through greater coordination of services.
3. Improve communication methods to connect with more early education partners and more families seeking care.
4. Collaborate with community partners to Produce 2000 Day manual.



## Nexus of District Goals and Strategic Priority 1: Early Education Access

Improve <b>academic achievement</b> at every LPS school site.	Improve <b>operational efficiency</b> across LPS.	Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a <b>safe and welcoming culture</b> .	Increase LPS <b>community engagement and empower families</b> as partners.
<p>Expand access to and support community providers of preK services in order to <b>prevent formation of opportunity gaps</b> in later years.</p> <p>Collaborate with community partners to articulate <b>performance metrics</b> consistent with EEC guidance.</p>	<p>Determine sustainable LPS preK capacity and <b>support coordination</b> and determination of capacity among community partners</p>	<p>Improve <b>outreach and communication efforts</b> to connect with more families and provide accurate information re preK opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Support</b> and coordinate efforts by community partners and Early Childhood Council to cultivate <b>preK opportunities for all Lowell families</b>.</p> <p>Leverage collective expertise of community partners and internal staff to develop <b>2000 Day manual</b> for Lowell families.</p>



**Strategic Priority # 2:** Increase access for all students to high performing seats through the continuous improvement of all schools, the expansion of high demand programs, and an intensive focus on turning around historically underperforming schools.

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**Why:** Systemic challenges have produced inequitable access for high-need students to high-quality programming and is exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis.

**Current Strength:** Large pockets of excellence exist across LPS, which is evident from the vibrant culture of pride that is evident within virtually all LPS school communities.

#### Action Steps:

1. Incorporate more blended learning strategies into academic programming in response to the COVID-19 crisis and closure.
2. Examine choice assignment policies and practice with recommendations to the Lowell School Committee during the 2020 – 2021 school year.
3. Develop consensus definition for high-quality in order to identify best ways to expand access to those opportunities that clearly exist throughout LPS. \*\*
4. Target support and oversight around Renaissance Network of schools.
5. Plan timeline for investments necessary to achieve 1:1 digital learning environment.
6. Organize and deploy supports to English Learner population.
7. Develop facility improvement planning process for each school to complete on an annual basis to determine infrastructure, maintenance, and technology priorities.







**Strategic Priority # 2:** Increase access for all students to high performing seats through the continuous improvement of all schools, the expansion of high demand programs, and an intensive focus on turning around historically underperforming schools. **(Cont.)**

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\*\*Developing a **consensus definition of high-quality** leading to more equitable access

Breaking apart that process:

1. Procure and implement **comprehensive data visualization** system to change data is collected, utilized, and presented.
2. Organize professional development and supports in recognition of the unique role that **social and emotional needs play in students' hierarchy of learning needs** to reduce troubling trends in student conduct and behavior.
3. Target investments and staffing support **to cultivate school cultures and climates more conducive to students' needs** and provide educators greater support with regard to student discipline.
4. Explore the **expansion of K-8 enrichment activities**, including arts and athletics in order to provide for more compelling and hospitable environments.
5. Concentrate **budgetary decision-making within school communities** so decisions are made by those closest to students and familiar with their needs.



## Nexus of District Goals and Strategic Priority 2: High-Performing Seat Access

Improve **academic achievement** at every LPS school site.

Develop a **comprehensive definition of high-quality** programming that includes measurable data, social and emotional foundational support, accessibility to reliable instructional technology, and equitable enrichment programming.

Improve **operational efficiency** across LPS.

Identify equitable **blended learning strategies** in response to potential need to operate remotely.

Complete **yearly facility improvement plans** for each building to understand comprehensive infrastructure priority list for each school community including climate control challenges, plumbing issues, electrical capacity, technology needs, and any potential safety improvement.

Implement site-based budgeting practices to ensure **informed decision-making with regard to staffing** and support structures.

Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a **safe and welcoming culture**.

Support school communities in the development of **equitable disciplinary practices** and cultivation of constructive school climates.

Identify and invest in supports necessary to **support the district's EL population, students with disabilities, and other high-need subgroups** through targeted strategies that include more robust family engagement and SEL supports.

Increase LPS **community engagement and empower families** as partners.

Examine **school assignment practices** and policies in order to develop recommendations to the Lowell School Committee.



**Strategic Priority # 3:** Align secondary school curriculum and programs for all students with post-secondary opportunities so that they are college, career, and life ready upon graduation.

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**Why:** To prepare students for success in an increasingly competitive world, LPS must reverse concerning graduation, dropout, and chronic absenteeism and implement a secondary education program that provides students with engaging, rigorous, and meaningful opportunities.

**Current Strength:** The size, diversity, and external partnerships that characterize Lowell's flagship school affords LPS inherent advantages in the development of multifaceted opportunities for students across various pathways.

**Action Steps:**

1. Implement comprehensive high school redesign program built on three distinct overarching pathways to serve as focal points of students' secondary careers.\*\*
2. Based on disproportionality among subgroups, target supports for more supportive environments to reduce concerning graduation, dropout, and attendance data.
3. Execute inclusive, community-wide effort under Portrait of a Graduate initiative to define "student success" consistent with student' post-secondary needs.
4. Continue to execute strategies, including those around staff culture under LHS turnaround plan.





**Strategic Priority # 3:** Align secondary school curriculum and programs for all students with post-secondary opportunities so that they are college, career, and life ready upon graduation. **(Cont.)**

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\*\*Implement a comprehensive **high school redesign** program with **rigor** reflective of the challenges students will encounter as graduates and that is **relevant** to the skills that post-secondary opportunities will demand. The foundation of that redesign process will be grounded in the cultivation of meaningful **relationships** between students and the educators who will guide them through three interest-based pathways:

1. Expansion of **rigorous college level** programming:
  - A) Early college/dual enrollment programming with Middlesex Community College.
  - B) Advanced Placement program at Lowell High School
2. Develop additional **alternative educational options** for students requiring more non- tradition learning environments, expanding upon the success of programs like the Career Academy.
3. Explore expansion of in-house **career and technical education (CTE) programs** and expansion of partnership with Greater Lowell Technical High School to afford students greater access to ch. 74 certified pathway programming opportunities.





## Nexus of District Goals and Strategic Priority 3: Secondary Programming Alignment

Improve <b>academic achievement</b> at every LPS school site.	Improve <b>operational efficiency</b> across LPS.	Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a <b>safe and welcoming culture</b> .	Increase LPS <b>community engagement and empower families</b> as partners.
<p>Implement high <b>school redesign strategy</b> based on three interest-based pathways:</p> <p>A) College level <b>rigor</b> (AP/EC),</p> <p>B) Portfolio of <b>alternative educational</b> options (non-traditional space),</p> <p>C) <b>Career and technical education programming</b> (CTE) to provide more intentional pathways for students and reverse declining graduation, dropout, and attendance data.</p>	<p>Seek <b>additional Chapter 74 certifications</b> for Lowell High School programs.</p> <p>Build stronger <b>reciprocal partnership with GLTHS</b> to expand CTE offerings to more LHS students.</p>	<p>Identify <b>additional school culture opportunities</b> to be realized with the completion of the LHS construction project.</p>	<p>Expand existing and explore new partnership opportunities with higher education institutions in the Lowell community for <b>potential career pathways and educator pipelines</b>.</p> <p>Engage in a <b>community-wide effort to define “student success”</b> in 2020 through Portrait of a Graduate initiative that includes relevant, 21st century skill sets and capacities.</p>



**Strategic Priority # 4:** Leverage the rich diversity that defines the Lowell community through a fundamental commitment to equity so that all students access the full benefits of growing up in a truly global community.

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**Why:** Celebrating Lowell's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity provides students with insight into the globalized society in which they will reside, creating a more hospitable environment that is conducive to more robust school and family partnerships.

**Current Strength:** Lowell's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity are a defining character of the community and provides the opportunity for cultural awareness and provides students with the chance for a deeper understanding of the value of diversity.

**Action Steps:**

1. Development additional and more diverse hiring pipelines through expanded recruitment and diversity cultivation efforts.
2. Implementation of cultural responsiveness training across all school communities in recognition of the unique needs of the LPS student population.
3. Focus on the invaluable benefits of learning within globalized community through events, curriculum choices, and family engagement.
4. Improved and expanded communication strategies to be sure that LPS is connecting with all students' families.
5. Further establish and rely on school site councils to engage all stakeholders.



## Nexus of District Goals and Strategic Priority 4: Leveraging Diversity

Improve <b>academic achievement</b> at every LPS school site.	Improve <b>operational efficiency</b> across LPS.	Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a <b>safe and welcoming culture</b> .	Increase LPS <b>community engagement and empower families</b> as partners.
Explore opportunities to celebrate and affirm Lowell's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity through <b>cultural relevant and sustaining curricular and programmatic choices</b> .	<p>Ensure budgetary decisions are consistent with <b>needs of each school community's diverse population</b> of students and families through site-based budgeting.</p> <p>Implement a <b>renewed focus on recruitment and the cultivation of diversity</b> in order to deepen the pool of LPS prospective employees.</p>	Improve district and school-based communications with families and community partnerships through revamped communication methods and <b>adoption of universal translation services system</b> .	<p>Continue utilization of school site councils in order to cultivate methods of <b>shared decision-making and collaboration with parent communities</b> in each LPS school.</p> <p>Continue collaboration with the Superintendent's Steering Committee to ensure <b>diverse community stakeholders are engaged and providing feedback</b> on district decisions.</p>



## Strategic Planning Initiative: Developing the Five-Year Plan for the Lowell Public Schools

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### Four Visions from the Four Strategic Priorities:

#### Strategic Priority 1:

LPS will work with early education service providers within the community to better coordinate its approach to preschool through greater collaboration with community-based partners, and through the shared expertise of those partners, enjoy greater insight into how best to serve current and future LPS students.

#### Strategic Priority 1:

LPS will adopt organization-wide practices reflecting a consensus definition of high-quality that contemplates equitable access for all students regardless of linguistic background, disability, or economic circumstances and will ensure each LPS school is on a path of continuous improvement.

#### Strategic Priority 3:

LPS will develop and deliver secondary programming grounded in the knowledge and skills that 21st century global citizenship requires including the ability to effectively communicate, think critically, analyze unforeseen challenges, and think creatively about how to contribute to an interconnected, interdependent, competitive society.

#### Strategic Priority 4:

LPS will cultivate an appreciation for the unique educational opportunities available to LPS students attributable to the global community represented by Lowell's diversity, and through that appreciation, LPS will establish a steadfast bond of trust and confidence with the Lowell community at-large.





## Lowell Public Schools - Developing Strategic Plan

Strategic Priorities: Core Component of the LPS 5-Year Strategic Plan

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### What's next?

The LPS administration will continue to vet the components of the Strategic Plan with the Superintendent's Steering Committee, bargaining unit representatives, district leaders, and other stakeholders.

A proposed draft of the complete Strategic Plan is expected to be presented to the Lowell School Committee in conjunction with the proposed FY 21 operating budget on May 6, 2020.

Similar to the budget proposal, the superintendent and leadership team will continue to make adjustments and reframe pieces of the Strategic Plan as necessary in order to ensure the flexibility and adaptability necessitated by the uncertainties of the COVID-19 public health crisis are incorporated into the plan as needed.

